

TREASURE OF THE SAN ANDREAS

by Ted Smith

*Continues the story
of the mystery
surrounding the
discovery of an
estimated 20 billion
pounds sterling in
gold, in the
underground
caverns of New
Mexico.*

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Pizarro gave strict orders to his men that the natives were not to be molested. And as the Peruvians everywhere met the Spaniards with kindness and generosity, and piled them with gifts, there was no excuse for any man to infringe his orders. Strangely, for once, the Spaniards were on their best behaviour, seeming to realise that much of their future success depended upon the continuing goodwill of the very people they had come to rob and destroy.

Pizarro was not remiss in letting the natives know what had brought him to their land. He had it promulgated wherever he went that he had come in the name of the "Holy Vicar of God and of the sovereign of Spain, requiring the obedience of the inhabitants as true children of the Church, and vassals of his lord and master."

And as the simple natives made no reply, they not being able to understand one word of what was said to them, he took muteness to mean compliance, and had their allegiance to the Crown of Castile duly recorded by the notary.

After several weeks of reconnoitering the district, Pizarro decided on a locality ninety miles south of Tumbes to establish in November 1532 the first Spanish town in the Inca empire. Plans were drawn up, buildings were constructed, local government was inaugurated, and the troops were each granted title to divisions of land. The problem of labour was solved by giving each Spaniard a repartimieto, or gang of Indian slaves. The good Dominican bothers agreed with the leaders of the expedition that this would "serve the cause of religion and tend to the natives spiritual welfare". Having attended to these matters with punctilious regard for the well being of the 'unenlightened heathen', Pizarro bestowed on his young town the name of San Miguel in recognition of the aid given him by that saint during the fierce campaign on Puna. At this time, he had a large accumulation of gold and silver melted down into ingots to send to his creditors in Panama. Much of the bullion belonged to his troops, but he managed to persuade them to relinquish their shares for the present, after pledging, on his word of honour, to repay them out of the first spoils to fall into their hands.

During the time spent reconnoitering the district, Pizarro had gleaned much reliable information concerning the state of the Inca empire. He had learned from various sources that a bloody civil war had been fought by the two Inca princes, and that Huascar, the eldest son of the Inca, Huayna Capac, had come off rather badly in the struggle with his half brother, Atahualpa. Several battles had been fought, with heavy losses inflicted on Huascar. Forced to retire to his capital of Cozco, he had quickly raised fresh levies from the surrounding countryside. By the spring of 1532, a few months before the landing of the Spaniards, the quickly gathered peasant army of Huascar was

beaten and routed by the more disciplined and experienced army of Atahualpa. Huascar was taken prisoner while trying to escape, and was ordered to be held in strict confinement in the fortress of Xauxa. Meanwhile, Atahualpa retired to Cajamarca to celebrate his great victory, and there to receive the Inca nobles who eagerly came to congratulate him and do him homage. Pizarro had heard many more accounts of the rich and all powerful king who was known as the Inca.

Although some of these accounts staggered the imagination, they nevertheless fitted in perfectly with the stories he had heard many times before. If they were true, the Inca places and temples were crammed to bursting with immense amounts of treasures in gold, silver and precious jewels. In fact, the opulence and power of the Inca monarch far exceeded that of the most exalted of asiatic despots. He was the Inca, claiming to be a divine being, the 'Son of the Sun', he was the source of all greatness, all strength, all benefit, and he was raised far above the highest nobles of his kingdom. Even the most powerful and imperious of the Inca aristocracy, with pretensions to the same divine origin, dared not approach him, unless barefoot, and carrying a light burden on his back as a symbolic sign of deepest reverence.

It is not certain when Pizarro first contemplated some audacious stroke, some energetic attack that would achieve complete surprise, which might deliver the Inca, Atahualpa, into his hands. It is probable that he conceived the idea soon after learning that the monarch was close at hand, sojourning with his conquering army at Cajamarca.

Pizarro wasted no further time waiting for Almagro to arrive with reinforcements. Soon after hearing that Atahualpa was encamped at Cajamarca, only 10 or 12 days march away, he put himself at the head of his troops, and started out from the gates of San Miguel. With his tiny force, consisting of not more than 177 men, he was determined to conquer an empire. His force included 87 infantry, 67 cavalry, 20 crossbow men and 3 arquebusiers. He would like to have seen reinforcements arrive from Panama, but after many weeks of waiting in vain, during which time his ruffian band had grown more and more restless, he concluded that if he did not move at once, he would soon have to face evils far greater than those to be met on the road. A life of idleness and tedium inevitably led to serious trouble with the men threatening to get out of hand. If that happened, a breakdown of command, the whole enterprise would be ruined, along with every advantage he had fought hard to gain. There was nothing for it but to move out. So, on the 24th of September, 1532, he took an easterly direction over the level district towards the neighbouring snow capped Cordilleras. Once on the Inca Road, an excellent highway connecting all parts of the empire, it was for a time, an easy, almost carefree jaunt through enchanting country. Everywhere were picturesque villages surrounded by the rich and flowering vegetation of a warm climate.

Mountain streams flowed through isolated valleys of exceptional loveliness. Higher up, on the slopes of the Cordilleras, browsing flocks of Lamas wandered with sedate ease. Everywhere the Spaniards were treated with deference by the kindly, inoffensive natives, who came out to meet them with refreshments, and to render them every assistance. Along the Inca Road they were given comfortable accommodation in the Tambos, which provided for all their needs. Man and beast were then allowed to stay in the royal caravanserais, usually reserved for the exclusive use of the Inca during his progresses. The Spaniards soon began to realise that the state ruled over by the Inca was efficiently managed, with stern laws which were strict-

ly, and in some cases severely, enforced. They had seen some evidence of this lawful severity in a village, where several Indians were strung up by their heels, having been executed for molesting nuns belonging to a nearby convent of the Virgins of the Sun.

Five days out from San Miguel, Pizarro noticed with uneasiness, some grumbling in the ranks, and deduced it was the work of the fault-finders who has stirred up trouble earlier on. If they were permitted to go unchecked, they would soon incite more trouble. He therefore called a halt, and addressed his men, inviting those who wanted to go back to San Miguel to do so. No one, he told them, whose whole heart was not in the venture should go forward with him. If any among them had had second thoughts, let them now turn back. As for himself, he would rather go on alone into the interior than drag along unwilling men. Pizarro took a big risk here, because he had no way of knowing how many of his followers would desert him, and he gambled everything in making the offer. But only nine men stepped forward to avail themselves of the chance to go back. They were four infantrymen and five cavalrymen. The remainder of his company loudly proclaimed their intention to go forward wherever he would lead them, even to hell if need be.

Once on the road again, Pizarro was determined to advance with all possible speed. He would brook no further delays. He would not even slacken the pace although breathing became difficult on the higher slopes where the atmosphere was rarefied. Soon, he and his men were entering the mountains, making perilous progress across deep ravines traversed by swaying rope bridges. They advanced slowly around precipitous sides of the mountains on narrow ledges barely wide enough for a single horse, each cavalryman dismounting and leading his steed by the bridle, where one misstep would send him hurtling thousands of feet into the frightful abyss! The dangerous narrow ledges were especially horrifying to the infantrymen hampered by their heavy burden of weapons and metal armour. A mere handful of Indian warriors could have annihilated them at any moment. Amazingly, they met with no resistance.

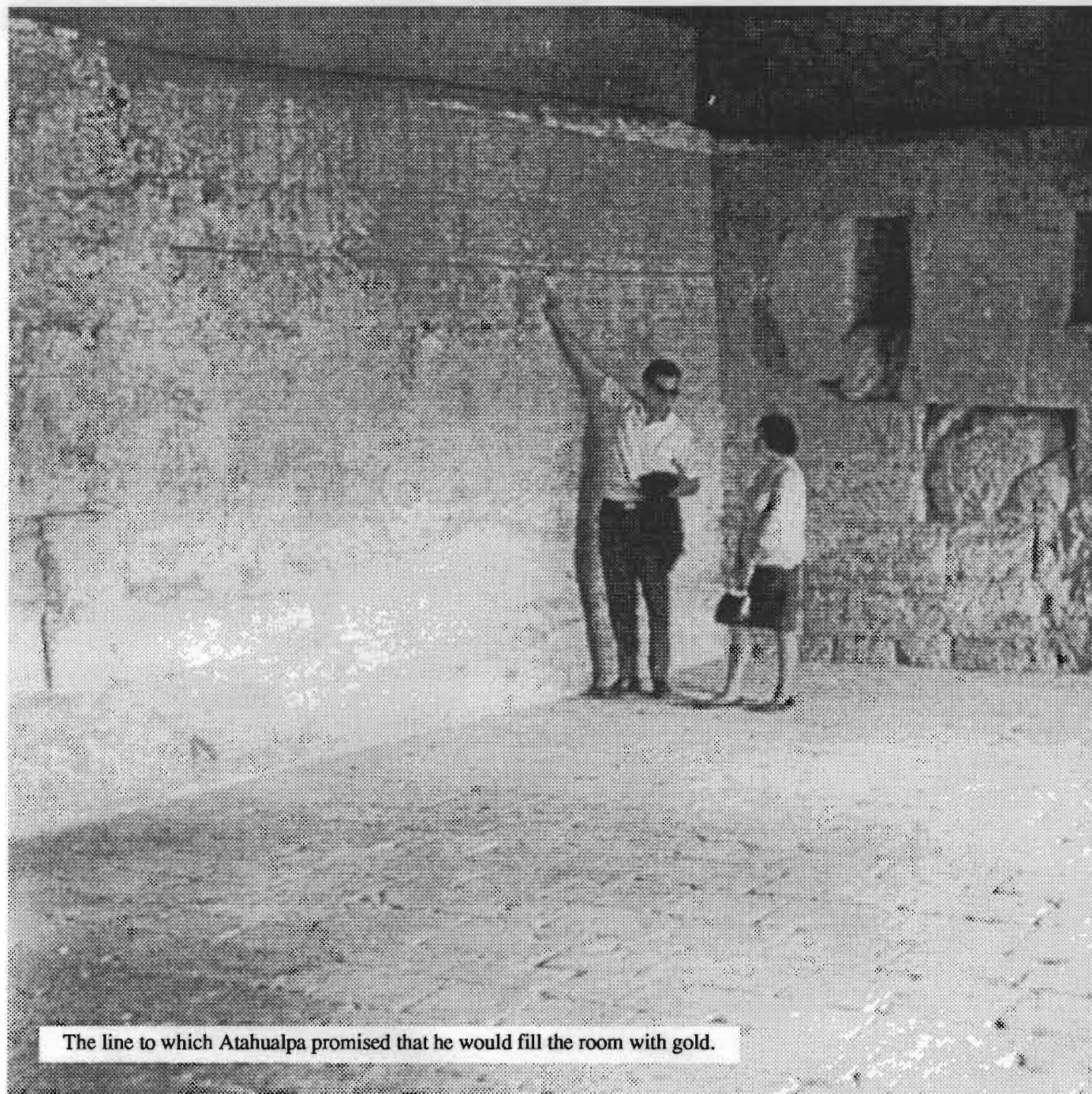
Coming down from the wild mountain passes, the Spaniards were approached by an Inca nobleman bearing formal greetings from his master, Atahualpa, who would gladly receive them at Cajamarca, where he was preparing a grand celebration for them.

It took a further seven days for the travel worn adventurers to descend the eastern side of the Andes to within sight of the far off little city of Cajamarca. There in the distance could be seen the white stone buildings gleaming in the sunlight, foremost among them was the convent of the Virgins of the Sun and the Temple of the Sun, enclosed by low buildings. The largest of the buildings, a fortress of stone, surrounded the plaza, facing the open country. The Spaniards pushed on until the whole valley unfolded before them. There spread out below, as far as the eye could see, a vast multitude of tents covered the northern slopes of the valley. Tens of thousands of warriors swarmed about the mighty camp. "Santa Maria!" murmured a crestfallen soldier.

At that moment, even the bravest among them felt fear. But it was too late to turn back, or to show the slightest sign of weakness because their own natives would, in that case, have been the first to rise up against them.

There was nothing for it but to put on a brave front, and go forward, which they did, with trumpets blaring and pennants flying, as they entered Cajamarca.

Pizarro and his followers found the town suspiciously quiet and deserted as they cautiously advanced along the paved street towards the central plaza. Not a single soul emerged to greet



The line to which Atahualpa promised that he would fill the room with gold.

them. Much perplexed, he sent Hernando de Soto with 15 horses to seek out the emperor. But fearing this number to be insufficient in the event of trouble, he quickly dispatched his brother, Hernando, to go after him with an additional 20 horses.

The pavilion of Atahualpa, surrounded by the vast military array, occupied some ground a short distance away from the town. The two squadrons of the Spanish cavalry heralded their swift approach with sharp blasts of a trumpet, and then galloped past the outlying tents of the silently amazed warriors.

The Spaniards found Atahualpa seated on a stool, with all his great nobles gathered around him. Hernando Pizarro and Soto left the squadrons of cavalry, and slowly rode up to him. Without dismounting, Hernando Pizarro stiffly bowed, and proceeded to inform the Inca, through the interpreter, Filipillo, that

they had come in the name of their great king to offer him their services, and to acquaint him with the knowledge of the true faith, and that they brought an invitation for him to visit their commander. Atahualpa did not answer, nor did he bother to make any sign that he had listened and understood the message. He remained quietly at ease, with his eyes fixed on the ground. A noble man standing beside him, gave them a quick, upward glance and said, "It is well."

This far from satisfied the Spaniards, who were still left wondering what the real intentions of the Inca might be towards them. Hernando Pizarro politely requested that Atahualpa answer personally, as they were anxious to know his pleasure. A faint smile passed over the face of Atahualpa as he deigned to reply.

"Tell your captain that I am keeping a fast, which will end tomorrow morning. I will then visit him, with my chieftains. In the meantime, let him occupy the public buildings on the square, and no other, till I come, when I will order what shall be done."

Hernando de Soto had noticed throughout the audience that Atahualpa kept regarding his horse with some interest. He decided to give the Inca a demonstration of his horsemanship. Letting go his grip on the rein, he spurred the spirited stallion into a furious gallop over open ground, then, wheeling him this way and that, showed all his elegant movements. Suddenly, turning the horse around, he charged at full gallop straight at Atahualpa, halting at the very last moment, so close to the seated monarch that foam from the stallion's sides splashed the royal robes. Atahualpa showed not the least concern, but remained just as impassive as before. Some of his warriors, however, reacted with cries of terror. That same night, we are told, Atahualpa had them put to death 'for showing unworthy weakness in front of the Spanish strangers'.

Hernando Pizarro and Soto returned to the central plaza in a despondent mood, having calculated the military strength of Atahualpa to be fifty thousand well disciplined warriors. Comparing that awesome number with their own diminutive force, the Spanish cause seemed doomed. Pizarro was not to be downcast by their misgivings. He had a plan, which he intended to put into operation when Atahualpa visited them the next day. His plan was to ambush the Peruvian emperor, and make him their prisoner.

It was noon the following day when the sentry posted at the top of the fortress cried out that the Indians were coming. The Inca, Atahualpa, seated on a throne of massive gold, was being carried in great pomp on a gorgeous litter, or palanquin, by four of his chief noblemen. The palanquin was richly covered with plates of gold and silver, and magnificently decorated with the dazzling coloured plumes of tropical birds. The raiment of the monarch was splendid vicuna robes of the finest texture. Golden ornaments were in his hair, and the imperial borla, or diadem, encircled his head. Around his neck he wore a superb collar of emeralds of unusual size and radiance. Accompanying Atahualpa was a vast concourse of his most prominent subjects. There were princes and noblemen, and his courtiers and military men, all dressed in their best finery. And as it was a festive occasion not one person was armed. In front of the long procession slowly advancing toward the city, hundreds of menials swept the road clear of litter, and sung songs of praise as they came, "which in our ears," says one of the conquistadors, "sounded like the songs of hell!" In precise military fashion the leading columns of the procession filed into the extensive square, or plaza, and parted to the left and right to allow the royal party to pass through without hindrance. It was late afternoon by the time five or six thousand Peruvians had entered the square. Not a single Spaniard was in sight.

"Where are the strangers?" demanded Atahualpa.

Just then, Pizarro's chaplain, a Dominican friar, Vencente de Valverde, stepped out into the open, with a bible in one hand and a crucifix in the other, and told the Inca that he has been commanded to expound the true faith. A long rambling speech followed, covering everything from the Creation to the Ascension, very little of which the Inca could understand though he listened in respectful silence. Valverde then went on to beseech Atahualpa to renounce his own beliefs and embrace those of the Christians. Finally, he called on the Inca to acknowledge himself a vassal of the Emperor Charles the Fifth. The face of Atahualpa grew darker as the words of the priest were explained

to him by the native interpreter, Filipillo. He nodded abruptly, as if he had heard enough.

"I am the subject of no man," he replied.

I am the greatest king on earth. Your emperor may be great," he conceded, "and for that, I am willing to be his brother, and to welcome his subjects to my land. But this Pope of whom you speak, he must be a very crazy man if he thinks he can give away countries which do not belong to him. As for my faith, I will not change it. Your God was put to death by the same men he created. But mine," he concluded, pointing to the gleaming rays of the sun descending behind the mountains, "still lives in the skies, and looks down upon his children."

Atahualpa seemed to ponder on his own words for a moment, then he said harshly, "By what authority do you say these things to me?" Holding up his bible, Valverde replied, "This is my authority."

Atahualpa took the bible, and examined it, then, with an impatient shrug, tossed it to the ground, and angrily cried, "Where are your friends, who have committed crimes against my people? I will not leave this place until they have answered for the many wrongs they have done!" The priest, deeply shocked by the insult showed to the sacred book, stepped back a pace, and crossed himself. He stayed only to pick up the bible, and hurried away to inform Pizarro of what had occurred.

"Why do we waste our breath talking to the dog?" growled Valverde.

Pizarro slyly inquired, "What would you have me do?"

"Set on, at once; I absolve you."

Pizarro needed no further prompting. Now was the time for action! He hastened outside, and waved a white scarf in the air. It was the prearranged sign to commence hostilities. In the fortress overlooking the plaza, Pedro de Candia applied a smouldering match to the falconet, or small cannon, aimed point blank at the Peruvian crowd; and, almost at once, a lethal shot crashed through them, leaving a swathe of mangled bodies in its path. The resounding roar of the gun, followed by the loud screams of the wounded and terrified natives, signalled the concealed Spaniards to hurry forth. The mail-clad troops rushed into the plaza, shouting their war cries, and brandishing their weapons, and threw themselves upon the astonished, defenceless Indians. They worked mightily on the semi-naked bodies, with swords, axes and pikes, their blows falling at random without mercy. Hernando Pizarro and Soto, each commanding a squadron of cavalry, charged into the crowd, dealing strokes, right and left, with their blood stained swords. Repeatedly, they plunged headlong in the press, forcing it back, or trampling it down under the failing hoofs of their heavy war horses. The Indians, taken by surprise, were thrown into a state of panic. Screaming in terror, they trampled on one another, as they surged back and forth, scarcely knowing in what direction to go to escape the slaughter. Some tried to climb up the walls of the plaza, but they were easily picked off by the arquebusiers and crossbow-men. Others attempted to reach the narrow streets of the city, but they were met by the long pikes of the soldiers posted on the skirts of the crowded square. Every exit was blocked with piles of dead and dying bodies. In vain did the wretched Indians struggle to get away. So great was their fear and anguish, and their frantic exertions to avoid the stabbing swords and hewing axes, that one large party of Indians actually burst through a part of the thick stone wall surrounding the plaza! It collapsed, leaving a gap 100 metres wide, through which many began to scramble. Once out

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in the open, they fled in all directions, but even these poor runaways did not elude the Spaniards for long. The cavalymen, striking their iron heels into their chargers, leaped through the gaping hole, and gave chase, until all were overtaken and killed. Meanwhile the despairing Indian nobles, in trying to protect their beloved Inca, put themselves in front of the Spaniards, or, at least, offered themselves as easy targets to be slain by their weapons. Some of the nobles, struck down, but not killed, clawed their way out from under the dead and dying to an unsteady footing on the slippery blood soaked ground, and again took their places by the palanquin of their master. With their dying gasps, they clung to the horses, or to the legs of the Spanish soldiers. Soon their rapidly dwindling numbers could no longer withhold the cruel onslaught, and their last desperate struggles were swiftly brought to an end. Now only the Inca, Atahualpa, was left alive, and some of the Spanish cavaliers wanted to kill him too, but Pizarro jumped in front of them and, stretching out his

arms, shouted at them to desist on pain of death. "Let no man who values his life, strike the Inca!" A sword, already uplifted, descended, and the Pizarro received a wound on the hand. It was a minor wound, and it was the only casualty the Spaniards experienced throughout the late afternoon of unmitigated savagery. Indeed, the unprovoked assault on the five to six thousand defenceless Indians was exceptionally ferocious, because it took only half an hour to butcher every single one of them. "The Inca will, at all times," said Pizarro, "be treated with the utmost respect."

He took the white scarf from around his neck and, wrapping it around his wounded hand, wiped the blade of his sword clean on it. "Is that understood by all of you?" When no one answered, he sheathed his sword. Atahualpa was then taken a prisoner to the fortress.

When the ghastly tidings of what had happened in the plaza reached the Inca camp, the army of Atahualpa took fright and dissolved overnight.

The tragic fate of Peru was now settled. A mere handful of Spaniards had triumphed.

Atahualpa, deprived of his former grandeur, but free to enjoy the attentions of his household and wives, and certain other privileges befitting his high rank, continued to hold court in miniature. His visitors were allowed to come and go, and these kept him well informed of events. From them he learned how the Spaniards had ransacked the temples and palaces to gain possession of enormous plunder. It was very evident from these reports that the strangers had an insatiable desire for gold. Could their avarice be used to secure his freedom? One day, when Pizarro came to his quarters, Atahualpa made him a fantastic proposal. "Set me free," he said, abruptly, "and I will cover the floor of this room with gold."

Those Spaniards present stared in amazement, for the room was about 17 feet wide, by 22 feet long. Taking in the size of the room, Pizarro silently expressed his doubt by slowly shaking his head. Not all the gold in the world could

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cover that space. Atahualpa, misunderstanding the doubtful reaction to his offer to mean that it was not pleasing enough, immediately declared, "he would not just cover the floor, but would fill the room with gold as high as he could reach."

As he spoke he raised himself on tiptoe, and stretched out his fingers against the wall. Not one Spaniard present really believed him, but Pizarro was willing to accept the offer, because he saw a chance of collecting all the gold that was readily available to the monarch. The Indians would not hide gold against the wishes of their master. Pizarro took a crayon, and drew a red line along the wall at the height indicated by Atahualpa. It measured nine feet from the floor. The Inca promised that he would also fill a smaller adjoining room twice with silver. All he wanted in return was his freedom.

Pizarro agreed to this, and had the terms of the proposal duly recorded by a notary. He further agreed that the Inca should have two months in which to fulfil his pledge.

Atahualpa wasted no time in dispatching couriers to Cuzco and other important places with instructions to remove the gold and silver ornaments and utensils from the temples and palaces, and convey them with all speed to Cajamarca. In the meantime, both Pizarro and his chaplain, Valverde, tried through reasoning and gentle persuasion to bring their prisoner to a true understanding of their faith. Atahualpa would listen with calm and polite attention as they implored him to renounce his God. In vain did Pizarro and Valverde labour to convert him. He was, however, impressed by the argument Pizarro invariably employed to end his sermons "that it could not be the true God whom Atahualpa worshiped, as he had failed to save him from the Spaniards."

Very soon the gold and silver began to trickle in. It mainly consisted of massive pieces of plate, with an average weight of about 10 to 12 kilograms. Because of the great distances the llama trains and porters had to travel, it came in slowly. Nevertheless, the amounts arriving each

day were considerable. The steady stream of porters, bearing their loads from all parts of the empire, brought in quantities of precious metals worth millions of dollars every day. The Spaniards gazed with greedy eyes on the growing piles of gleaming treasure. There was more gold than they could ever have imagined. But they could never be satisfied. As the heaps of gold and silver increased, so their avarice increased, and they became more demanding and restless. Pizarro loudly inveighed against the Peruvians for bringing in the gold too slowly, but Atahualpa reminded him of the great distances which had to be covered, that while a swift runner could reach Cuzco in several days, it took several weeks for a slow moving llama train to come from Cuzco to Cajamarca. This explanation did little to soothe Pizarro's feelings of irritability. There were rumours of a general uprising by the Peruvians, and the Spaniards were beginning to feel acutely apprehensive. ❀

To be continued in the next issue of Nexus